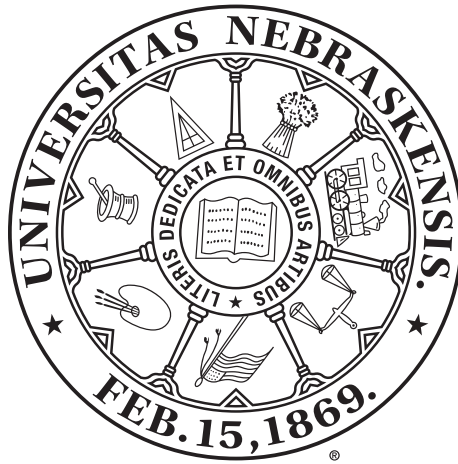




University of Nebraska System

2026 PRESIDENT'S EXCELLENCE AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Presented August 13, 2026

ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The university's most prestigious awards for teaching, research and engagement recognize individual faculty members and units whose work has had a significant impact on students, the university and the state.

OUTSTANDING RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY AWARD



SAJDA QURESHI, PH.D.

*Department of Information Systems and Quantitative Analysis
University of Nebraska at Omaha*

Dr. Sajda Qureshi is the D.B. and Paula Varner Professor of Information Systems at the University of Nebraska Omaha. She served as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Information Technology for Development for 20 years, making it the flagship Journal for ICT4D scholars internationally. She has over 200 peer reviewed publications in journals, conferences and books that are highly cited (i10-index 98).

Dr. Qureshi investigates Artificial Intelligence accountability and fairness while designing inclusive digital applications. Her contributions to knowledge are in uncovering the decision-making processes used by the machine learning algorithms in the context of access to resources.

Her research is funded federally, internationally and through technology companies. Dr. Qureshi's work has been recognized through awards, including an honorary doctorate from Sweden, keynote speeches and best paper awards. Her mentorship of students and faculty include her former doctoral students who are now deans — and are attending with us virtually today.



JIAN WANG, PH.D.

*Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering
University of Nebraska–Lincoln*

Dr. Jian Wang is the Wilmer J. and Sally L. Hergenrader Chair Professor of Mechanical Engineering in the Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He joined UNL in August 2015 after nine years at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

His research focuses on understanding, designing, and predicting the performance of structural materials for extreme environments by integrating multiscale experimental techniques with advanced modeling tools.

OUTSTANDING TEACHING AND INSTRUCTIONAL CREATIVITY AWARD



AMY DUHACHEK-STAPELMAN, M.D., MEHP

Department of Anesthesiology

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Dr. Amy Duhachek-Stapelman is a cardiothoracic anesthesiologist, educator, and faculty member in the UNMC Department of Anesthesiology, where she currently serves as the Interim Anesthesiology Residency Program Director. Since joining the faculty in 2006, she has held vital leadership roles, including Vice Chair of Education for the department and Vice President of Education for Nebraska Medicine. Nationally, she contributes to the field as a board examiner for the American Board of Anesthesiology.

Teaching remains Dr. Duhachek-Stapelman's true professional passion. While she frequently shares her insights at national conferences, her greatest fulfillment comes from the daily mentorship and training of students, residents, and fellows at UNMC. A proud alumna, she earned her B.S. from

UNL, followed by her M.D., internal medicine internship, and anesthesiology residency at UNMC. She further advanced her academic expertise by earning a Master of Education in the Health Professions from Johns Hopkins University in 2023.

FACULTY IP INNOVATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION AWARD



BENSON EDAGWA, PH.D.

Department of Pharmacology and Experimental Neuroscience

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Dr. Benson Edagwa is a professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Experimental Neuroscience at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

His collaborative research is focused on creating long-acting treatments for chronic illnesses such as HIV infection, viral hepatitis, opioid overdose and cardiometabolic diseases. Several inventions from the program have been licensed for clinical development.

Benson is the co-founder of Exavir Therapeutics Inc. and Aion Medicines Inc.

INNOVATIONS IN STUDENT SUCCESS AWARD



DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS

University of Nebraska at Kearney

The Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Nebraska at Kearney prepares students as critical thinkers and adept problem-solvers through coursework in mathematics and statistics.

Over the past five years, the department has consistently improved student success rates in introductory and general education courses through innovative curricular changes, evidence-based instructional strategies, campus collaborations focused on student success and a personal touch in small classes with exceptional instructors.

The department's 11 full-time faculty members and four adjunct instructors are dedicated to serving students through high-quality mathematics instruction in the classroom and caring support beyond the classroom. Their student-centered approach ensures strong learning outcomes that help prepare future leaders to think analytically and serve throughout the state of Nebraska and beyond.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE DEPARTMENTAL TEACHING AWARD



DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

University of Nebraska at Omaha

The Department of Computer Science at the University of Nebraska at Omaha prepares students to become competent, ethical and adaptable computing professionals in a discipline shaped by continual technological change.

Since introducing Nebraska's first computer science course in 1961, the department has pioneered the state's first ABET-accredited CS program, Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence, cross-campus Master of Science in AI, AI and online Machine Learning certificates and Nebraska's only Master of Science in CS Education, serving K-12 teachers in nine states. Faculty, including three NSF CAREER awardees in AI-affiliated fields and four recipients of five university teaching awards, serve close to 800 computer science and AI majors, plus master's and Ph.D. in IT students.

A collaborative teaching culture—reflected in coordinated course design, the Computer Science Learning Center, and industry-partnered Studio Projects—has produced measurable gains in retention and career success. Through K-12 outreach and industry partnerships, the department strengthens the computing workforce across Nebraska and the nation.